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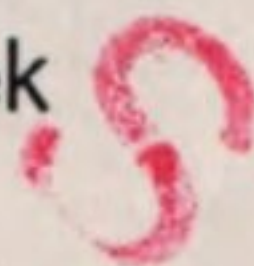
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The
Minstrel,
IN TWO BOOKS:
By James Beattie: L.L.D.
With a sketch of his life.



PARIS.

Published

by Parsons and Galignani.

Booksellers,

N^o 43. Vivienne Street.



JAMES BEATTIE, L. L. D.

Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in the Marischal College, or University of New Aberdeen; and Member of the Zealand Society of Arts and Sciences, &c. &c.

The pretensions attendant upon birth are generally admitted with reluctance; for as this species of merit is at most but equivocal, and in some measure detracts from the consequence of the rest of mankind, it is often submitted to with indignation, and when allowed at all, allowed with repugnance. The claims of wealth are at least equally suspicious, and we yield to them with a still worse grace: riches are often the patrimony or the acquisition of the basest of men, and, so far from being an infallible sign of merit, they are not unfrequently either the inheritance or the produce of crime. It is far otherwise with genius: swollen wealth, adventitious descent, fictitious distinctions, are often contemptible, because they are generally the result of accident, but the « heaven-taught soul, » he, whose mind is impressed with the seal of the Divinity, belongs to a higher order of beings, and experiences the voluntary respect of all, whose minds are not replete with malice, or cankered with envy, or soured by the workings of an unsocial jealousy. These sentiments will be felt and acknowledged by

those who possess any degree of intrinsic merit, and must be allowed to be peculiarly appropriate when applied to the subject of the present memoir.

James Beattie is a native of Scotland, and was born some degrees to the north of « the hot-bed * of genius, » being a native of Kincardineshire. His father appertained to that class of men who are scarcely on a level with our English peasantry, but he was actuated by a liberal and generous spirit peculiar to the little farmers of his native country, for he aspired and actually contrived to obtain an excellent education for his son. The parochial schools in North Britain are most excellent seminaries for this purpose, and the five universities †, spread over the face of the country, contribute in an admirable manner to instil a tincture of learning, philosophy, and science into the youth destined to attend their various classes.

After the requisite preliminary acquisitions in his own neighbourhood, young Beattie repaired to New Aberdeen, and went through a regular course of study in that university, in which he was destined to be a professor. It is common for such young men as are not distinguished by the gifts of fortune to become *Bursars*, an idea of which is

* Edinburgh.

† 1st. Edinburgh; 2nd. Glasgow; 3rd. St. Andrew's; 4th. New Aberdeen, or Marischal College; and 5th. Old Aberdeen, or King's College.

in some measure conveyed by the expression of *being put on the foundation* in our English universities. To the honour of the Scotch ones, no opprobrious distinction—no menial office—no degrading servitude is annexed to the term, which merely implies the receipt of a revenue. On the contrary, it is a proof of superior merit, for instead of being a sinecure into which a student is inducted without formality, it becomes the *premium* of a victorious contest, and the just reward bestowed on the victor after a competition, in which classical excellence alone carries away the palm —

« *Non sine pulvere palmæ.* »

It is not unusual for many of the students to attend the various college classes, during a certain number of months, when they support themselves on the *bourse* of from four or five to nine or ten pounds *per annum*, and to superintend a parochial school during the remainder of the year; and there is some reason to believe that this was the case with Mr. Beattie. Certain it is that he acted in the capacity of a school-master during a considerable portion of the earlier part of his life, first at Alloa in Fifeshire, and afterwards in Kincardineshire. At length an opportunity presented itself of removing to Aberdeen, the third town in Scotland in point of trade, extent, and consequence. There he acted for some time in the humble situation of an usher to the *grammar*, or principal Latin school; and having married the daughter of the master, he per-

haps aspired to nothing more than becoming successor to his own father-in-law.

An event however occurred that soon taught him higher hopes, and afforded superior expectations. Mr. Beattie, who had long cultivated a taste for poetry, about this period applied himself with unremitting ardour to give a polish to his verses that should entitle them to meet the public eye, and he soon realized the most sanguine wishes of his friends in this respect.

His first publication was a volume of « Original Poems and Translations, » which appeared so early as 1760; some of these, after being purified and refined from their juvenile dross, have been since preserved in a new edition of the author's poetry.

In 1765 appeared his « Judgment of Paris, » and in 1767 he became known to Gray, and is said to have consulted him relative to the « Minstrel, » chiefly written in 1768, although part of it had been produced during the inspiration of his earlier years.

The author's object in the poem will be best gathered from the preface:

« The design was, says he, « to trace the progress of a poetical genius born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason, till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as a MINSTREL, that is, as an itinerant poet and musician—a character which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable, but sacred.

« I have endeavoured to imitate SPENSER, » adds he, « in the measure of his verse, and in the harmony, simplicity,

and variety of his composition. Antique expressions I have avoided; admitting, however, some old words where they seemed to suit the subject: but I hope none will be found that are now obsolete, or in any degree not intelligible to a reader of English poetry.

« To those who may be disposed to ask what could induce me to write in so difficult a measure, I can only answer that it pleases my ear, and seems from its Gothic structure and original to bear some relation to the subject and spirit of the poem. It admits both simplicity and magnificence of sound and of language beyond any other stanza that I am acquainted with. It allows the sententiousness of the couplet, as well as the more complex modulation of blank verse. What some critics have remarked of its uniformity growing at last tiresome to the ear, will be found to hold true only when the poetry is faulty in other respects. »

In 1770 the public deemed itself highly favoured by a work * which we only notice in this place to observe, that Mr. Gray's last letter to the author contained a high eulogium on that performance:

« I am happy, » says he, « to hear of your success, because I think you are serving the cause of human nature, and the true interests of mankind; your book is read here too (in England) with just applause. » **

* « An essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in opposition to Sophistry and Skepticism. »

** So far moderate men may approve what Mr. Gray says, but when he turns from Hume's tenets to his genius, and proclaims him « shallow », and an « infant », we are bound rather to respect the piety than the liberality of the poet:

« I have often thought David Hume, » says he, « a per-

In 1771 appeared part of a work which we have already noticed, viz. Book I. of « the Minstrel, or the progress of Genius, » in 4to. and in 1774, Book II. was published.* The whole has since been re-printed several times, and in a variety of sizes.

nicious writer, and believe he has done as much mischief here as he has done in his own country: a *turbid and shallow stream* often appears to our apprehensions very deep. A professed skeptic can be guided by nothing but his present passions (if he has any) and interests; and to be masters of his philosophy we need not his books or advice, for every *child* is capable of the same thing without any study at all. Is not that *naiveté* and good humour which his admirers celebrate in him owing to this, that he has continued all his days an *infant*, but one that unhappily has been taught to read and write? That childish nation, the French, have given him vogue and fashion; we, as usual, have learned from them to admire him at second hand.»

* It was about this time that many of the most distinguished of his own countrymen began to cultivate a friendship with, and pay respects to the talents of Mr. Beattie. We accordingly find that several of them addressed their poetical effusions to him; but we here only insert the following verses, written by Dr. Geddes, no less celebrated for his profound learning than his playful genius.

THE GRUMBLERS.

FROM A SATIRE OF HORACE.—BY MR. GEDDES.

Whence is it, Beattie, that we find
Scarce one of all the human kind
Content with that particular lot
Which choice procur'd, or chance begot?
Each dreaming still, if he possess'd
His neighbour's place, he should be bless'd.
« Happy the man, » the soldier says,
Worn out with toils, and broke with days,

In the mean time the merits of Mr. B. began to attract public notice. But something better than

« Who snug behind his counter lies,
« And sees his thousands round him rise ! »

« More happy soldier ! » cries again
The trader, trembling on the main ;
« He marches—fights—and, in a breath,

« 'Tis victory—or a glorious death :

« While I must live in constant fear,

« And shrink at every blast I hear ! »

The Country Squire, whom knotty cause

To London and the Chancery draws,

Oblig'd from earliest morn to wait

Till twelve o'clock at lawyer's gate ;

Exclaims, with many a peevish frown—

« How lucky those who live in town ! »

The lawyer, stunn'd with dire debate,

Would just as gladly rusticate ;

And talks, in the most rapt'rous strains,

Of rural seats and verdant plains.

The Doctor—but the complaints of all,

Not Luttrell, in St. Stephen's Hall,

Were able fully to describe—

So numerous is the grumbling tribe !

But should some God (the gods with ease

Can do whate'er their godships please)

Proclaim—« 'Tis granted—Henceforth, be

« A Merchant thou, a Soldier he ;

« A Lawyer this, and that a Squire ;

« Each have his relative desire—

« Why stand ye mute ? 'Tis given to chuse

« Your envied lots. » All, all refuse !

Sure Jove might burn with holy ire

To see them sneakingly retire ;

And, in his well-tim'd fury, swear—

He'd never more indulge their prayer.

barren admiration was produced, for the Earl of Errol,* who lived at Slains Castle, in the vicinity of Aberdeen, fortunately was induced to patronize Mr. Beattie while yet a young man. This nobleman accordingly exerted his influence with such zeal and success, that the assistant at their grammar-school was elected by the magistrates of New Aberdeen to the honourable and distinguished office of a Professor in their University.

An event occurred soon after that obtained for our poet a still more distinguished patronage and support. Mr. Hume was at this period considered by his countrymen as not only occupying an eminent station in the Republic of Letters, but also of being in possession of the chair of criticism, to which he had been in some measure elevated by the voluntary suffrages of the nation. To such an authority it was natural for a young man to look up for countenance and protection, and Mr. B. is accordingly said to have submitted his productions to his inspection with all that *deference*, but at the same time, with all that *hope* incident to one in his situation. The verdict of the Historian was not however so favourable as the Poet had perhaps a

* This is supposed to have been the handsome and magnificent Earl of Errol who ruined his fortune in one single day; that on which his present Majesty was crowned, when he appeared in the procession in the character of Hereditary Earl Marshal of Scotland. His robes are all that remain to his family of the large estates said to have been spent in that *gala*.

right to expect; and this little occurrence is asserted in a contemporary publication to have led to the « Essay on the Immutability of Truth in Opposition to Sophistry and Skepticism : » but we have good reason to think that this statement is incorrect. That work, however, whatever were the motives in which it originated, which we firmly believe to have been of the purest kind, possesses conspicuous merit. The author certainly had Dr. Reid in his eye, and followed the model presented by that very able Professor; what is not a little remarkable too, the scholar on this occasion acquired a more brilliant fame than the master.

This publication obtained for Mr. Beattie much fame, a small pension, and a large portion of friends; among whom are to be reckoned Dr. Gregory of Edinburgh, the Earl of Mansfield, Mrs. Montague, Dr. Johnson, Lord Lyttleton, Doctors Hurd and Porteus, together with the Bishops of Worcester and London.

Some of the zealots of the English establishment are now said to have expressed a wish that Mr. Beattie should be *converted from the Church of Scotland*, in order that from the « vantage ground » of a Bishopric, he might either terrify skeptics with his crozier, or over-awe them with his mitred eloquence. But it was observed by sensible and dispassionate men, that he could be of infinitely more service to the cause of Christianity, in the character of a simple layman, than whilst adorned with the *lawn sleeves*, as the apologies of church-

men for tenets of any kind always bore an interested aspect, while the support of those who were not themselves *supported* by the very establishment they patronised, appeared far more dignified and independent.

It would have been unjust, however, that his efforts should have been wholly unrewarded, and we accordingly find that Lord Mansfield, then Chief Justice of the King's Bench, recommended him to his Majesty for a gratuity of 200*l. per annum* from the privy purse; and to make use of the language of that day, « it was understood that, thus *pensioned*, he should lie on the watch and confute every skeptical and profane opinion that should, after all that he had written, dare to start up in the world. »

Having obtained fame and independence in his native country, Mr. Beattie was now desirous to visit London, and converse with the celebrated men of letters in the English capital. Being acquainted with Mr. Boswell, he applied to that gentleman in 1771, in his way to London, and obtained the following letter, which served as an introduction to the celebrated Lexicographer.

« TO DR. JOHNSON.

« MY DEAR SIR, *Edinburgh, July 27, 1771.*

« The bearer of this, Mr. Beattie, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Aberdeen, is desirous of being introduced to your acquaintance. His genius, and learning, and labours in the service of virtue and religion, render him

very worthy of it; and, as he has a high esteem of your character, I hope you will give him a favourable reception.

I ever am, &c.

JAMES BOSWELL.»

In consequence of this very flattering introduction, Mr. Beattie waited on Dr. Johnson soon after his arrival in London, presented his friend's letter to him, and was received in a manner that left him no room to complain. Not content with this first instance of politeness, the Doctor introduced Mr. Beattie to many of his friends, Mrs. Thrale in particular, and ever after spoke of him in such a manner as to testify his esteem.* That this esteem was mutual will appear from the following passage extracted from a letter written by Mr. Boswell to Dr. Johnson, and dated, « Edinburgh, Dec. 25, 1772. »

« I communicated to Beattie what you said of his book. In his last letter to me, he writes to me thus:—

« You judge very rightly in thinking that Dr. Johnson's favourable opinion of my book must give me great delight. Indeed it is impossible for me to say how much I am grati-

* « I thanked him (Dr. Johnson) for shewing civilities to Beattie. »

« Sir, (said he) I should thank you (Boswell); we all love Beattie. Mrs. Thrale says, if ever she has another husband, she'll have Beattie. He sunk upon us that he was married, else we should have shewn his lady more civilities. She is a very fine woman; but how can you shew civilities to a non-entity? »

Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. i. p. 354.

fied with it; for there is not a man upon earth whose good opinion I would be more ambitious to cultivate. His talents and his virtues I reverence more than any words can express. The extraordinary civilities (the paternal attentions I should rather say) and the many instructions I have had the honour to receive from him, will to me be a perpetual source of pleasure in the recollection.

« Dum memor ipse mei dum spiritus reget artus.

The subject of the present memoir, who about this time had obtained a diploma from the Marischal College, as LL. D. visited London once more in 1773, and on this occasion, we believe, brought his wife along with him. A long interval of five years elapsed, however, before he returned thither again, which circumstance was kindly remembered by Dr. Johnson, in a letter addressed to him at Aberdeen, of which the following is an extract: —

« TO DR. BEATTIE.

« SIR,

« More years than I have any delight to reckon have past since you and I saw one another; of this, however, there is no reason for making any reprehensory complaint: *sic fata ferunt*. But methinks there might pass some small interchange of regard between us. If you say, I ought to have written, I now write, and I write to tell you, that I have much kindness for you and Mrs. Beattie; and that I wish your health better, and your life long.

« Try change of air, and come a few degrees southward; a softer climate may do you both good; winter is coming on; and London will be warmer, and gayer, and busier, and more fertile of amusement than Aberdeen.

« My health is better, but that will be little in the ba-

lance, when I tell you that Mrs. Montague has been very ill, and is, I doubt, now but weakly, * &c. &c.

Your most humble Servant,

SAM. JOHNSON."

In 1783, Dr. Beattie presented the world with « *Dissertations Moral and Critical*, » in one volume, quarto. The subjects treated of in this work originally formed a course of prelections « which were read to those young gentlemen whom it was the author's business to initiate in the elements of moral science. » In the *Essay on Memory and Imagination*, he first gives a general account of memory, and then examines the question, whether it be connected with the brain? This he decides in the negative. While recapitulating the laws of Memory, he deduces a variety of useful maxims, but differs with Hume in every thing, and on every occasion, which is neither just nor philosophical, as it must be allowed by the most bigotted and prejudiced, that the great man to whom we allude, possessed an uncommon share of talent and discrimination, although he unfortunately could not extend his belief quite so far as many worthy persons among his countrymen.

In the *Dissertation on Imagination*, Dr. Beattie inquires into the principles of the association of ideas, heretofore so ably laid down by Locke. Mr. Hume enumerates the three following, viz.

1. Similitude or dissimilitude; 2. Causation; and
3. Contiguity of time or place.

* Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. ii. p. 821.

Our author, not content with this distribution, enlarges these into five :

1. Resemblance; 2. Contrariety; 3. Nearness of situation; 4. The relation of cause and effect, and 5. Custom.

His remarks on the origin of our ideas of beauty, genius and taste, must be allowed to possess an uncommon share of acuteness.

It may be perhaps superfluous at this enlightened period to shew the folly of belief in *dreams* : this however is the avowed object of the third Dissertation.

The fourth, which is divided into two parts, relates to the *Theory of Language*. *

Part I. treats of the Origin and general Nature of Speech; and

Part II. of Universal Grammar.

Having asserted Speech to be a gift derived directly from the Divinity, he then examines into the nature of the human voice, the power of articulation, the division of alphabetical writing into vowels and consonants; the attainments of pronunciation, orthography, emphasis, and accent; and he is necessarily copious on the admirable arts of writing and of printing.

After this, he enters into a wide field of literary

* In 1788 he republished an enlarged and corrected edition of this Essay.

discussion, and examines the origin, the progress, and the use of *Fable* and *Romance*. He gives an interesting dissertation on the character of the nations who introduced the feudal government and manners, and then expatiates on the *crusades*, *chivalry* and rise of *modern literature*, and *modern knight-errantry*, the *old* and *the new species of Romance*. On this occasion, he perhaps displays too much partiality for his friend Lord Lyttleton, whom he terms « the great historian ; » and, in conformity to the opinion of that nobleman, maintains that Henry Fielding possessed more wit and humour than any other man in modern times, Shakespeare alone excepted.

He also enters at great length into the subject of *natural attachment to kindred* ; and he treats the subject of *sublimity of composition* in a manner highly creditable to his taste.

In 1786, at the recommendation of the present Bishop of London, Dr. Beattie published « evidences of the Christian Religion, » in two volumes, octavo.

Thus the life of our author hath been a laborious one ; for what with cultivating the *Belles-Lettres*, attending to the instruction of his class in moral philosophy, composing, preparing for, and correcting the press, but little of his time can have been devoted to the pleasures of society. He was cheerful, however, and at times unbent his mind in the company of his old friends, until about ten years since, when a melancholy event occurred

that cast a gloom around him, and proved too fraught with affliction, notwithstanding his singular piety, to be borne without the extremity of human misery.

For many years his eldest son, at once his companion and his friend, had contributed not a little to cheer his mind, and promised to become the delight of his declining age. This stay, this prop, as it were, of all his comforts and all his hopes on earth, was snatched away from him on the 19th of November 1790, when he had attained the age of twenty-two, and displayed, on one hand, such a virtuous disposition as the fondest father might have been proud to behold, while, on the other, his genius and talents began to develop and afford an early promise of future excellence.

As a poet, the Doctor must be allowed to have attained great excellence. His taste is chaste, his versification elegant, and in choice of language and of imagery he is inferior to none of his contemporaries. Had he continued, like Pope and Dryden, to cultivate the Muses even in his old age, his classical talents and harmonious numbers would have ensured still greater fame, but there is some reason to suppose that he has long neglected the mountain of « Olympus » for the hill of « Zion », and been more anxious to attain the reputation of a *Christian hero* than that of the greatest of modern bards.

In Dr. B. the kindred talent of music has been united with that of poetry; he not only likes and understands this science as an *amateur*, but is him-

self actually a proficient: his instrument is the violin*.

As to his person, he is about the middle size, and although his aspect be pleasing, yet there is nothing that would distinguish him from the bulk of mankind, were it not for the vivacity of the poet, which at times still beams in his eye, and irradiates his countenance.

Dr. B. has refrained from visiting the metropolis for some years: he was formerly accustomed to repair thither almost every summer, sometimes making a journey by land, and sometimes, by way of variety, preferring a voyage by sea.

* Both Dr. B. and his son cultivated music, and were accustomed to assist at little domestic concerts along with a few friends, who like themselves were not only *amateurs*, but occasional performers. The Doctor indeed, even early in life, seems to have taken an opportunity of denouncing « anathema » against those who were not inspired by « the dulcet sounds » of melody, being ever ready to exclaim with Shakespeare:

« That man who hath not music in his soul,
And is not mov'd by concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for rape, for stratagem, and wiles, » &c.

« Is there a heart that music cannot melt?

Alas! how is that rugged heart forlorn!

Is there who ne'er those mystic transports felt
Of solitude and melancholy born?

He needs not woo the Muse; he is her scorn.

The sophist's rope of cobweb he shall twine,

Mope o'er the schoolman's peevish page, or mourn,

And delve for life in Mammon's dirty mine;

Sneak with the scoundrel fox, or grunt with glutton swine.»

THE MINSTREL, Book I. lvi.

He now resides constantly at Aberdeen during the winter, and contents himself with a short excursion to the Wells of Peterhead towards the beginning of autumn.

As his health is not yet completely re-established, Dr. Glennie at present superintends his class; but the author of this article is happy to learn, from a gentleman who saw and conversed with him some time since, that he has recovered from his late indisposition, has become once more cheerful, and is in full possession of all his faculties.

May he long continue to testify his indignation against

« Pyrrho's maze and Epicurus' styè, »

and exclaim now as heretofore :

« Hence ! ye , who snare and stupify the mind ,
Sophists , of beauty, virtue , joy, the bane !
Greedy and fell , though impotent and blind ,
Who spread your filthy nets in Truth's fair fane ,
And ever ply your venom'd fangs amain !
Hence to dark Error's den , whose rankling slime
First gave you form ! hence ! lest the Muse should deign
(Though loath on theme so mean to waste a rhyme)
With vengeance to pursue your sacrilegious crime. »

N. B. We have lately been informed that Dr. Beattie died a few months since. (*Note by the Editors.*)

THE
MINSTREL;
OR,
THE PROGRESS OF GENIUS:
A POEM,
IN TWO BOOKS.

THE FIRST BOOK.

I.

Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar;
Ah! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Has felt the influence of malignant star,
And waged with fortune an eternal war;
Check'd by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,
And Poverty's unconquerable bar,
In life's low vale remote has pined alone,
Then dropt into the grave, unpitied and unknown!

II.

And yet the languor of inglorious days
Not equally oppressive is to all.
Him, who ne'er listen'd to the voice of praise,
The silence of neglect can ne'er appal.
There are, who, deaf to mad ambition's call,
Would shrink to hear th' obstrep'rous trump of
Supremely blest if to their portion fall [Fame;
Health, competence, and peace. Nor higher aim
Had HE whose simple tale these artless lines pro-
claim.

III.

The rolls of fame I will not now explore;
Nor need I here describe in learned lay
How forth THE MINSTREL fared in days of yore,
Right glad of heart, though homely in array;
His waving locks and beard all hoary grey:
While from his bending shoulder decent hung
His harp, the sole companion of his way,
Which to the whistling wind responsive rung;
And ever as he went some merry lay he sung.

IV.

Fret not thyself, thou glitt'ring child of pride,
That a poor Villager inspires my strain;
With thee let Pageantry and Power abide:
The gentle Muses haunt the sylvan reign;

Where through wild groves at eve the lonely swain
Enraptured roams to gaze on Nature's charms.
They hate the sensual, and scorn the vain,
The parasite their influence never warms,
Nor him whose sordid soul the love of gold alarms.

V.

Tho' richest hues the peacock's plumes adorn,
Yet horror screams from his discordant throat.
Rise, sons of harmony, and hail the morn,
While warbling larks on russet pinions float,
Or seek at noon the woodland scene remote,
Where the grey linnets carol from the hill!
O let them ne'er, with artificial note,
To please a tyrant, strain the little bill.
But sing what heaven inspires, and wander where
they will.

VI.

Lib'ral, not lavish, is kind Nature's hand;
Nor was perfection made for man below:
Yet all her schemes with nicest art are plann'd,
Good counteracting ill, and gladness wo.
With gold and gems if Chilian mountains glow;
If bleak and barren Scotia's hills arise;
There plague and poison, lust and rapine grow;
Here peaceful are the vales, and pure the skies,
And freedom fires the soul, and sparkles in the eyes.

VII.

Then grieve not, thou, to whom th' indulgent
Vouchsafes a portion of celestial fire; [Muse
Nor blame the partial Fates if they refuse
Th' imperial banquet, and the rich attire.
Know thine own worth, and reverence the lyre!
Wilt thou debase the heart which God refined?
No; let thy heav'n-taught soul to heav'n aspire,
To fancy, freedom, harmony, resign'd;
Ambition's grov'ling crew for ever left behind.

VIII.

Canst thou forego the pure ethereal soul
In each fine sense so exquisitely keen,
On the dull couch of Luxury to loll,
Stung with disease, and stupified with spleen;
Fain to implore the aid of Flatt'ry's screen,
Even from thyself thy loathsome heart to hide
(The mansion then no more of joy serene)
Where fear, distrust, malevolence, abide,
And impotent desire, and disappointed pride?

IX.

O how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her vot'ry yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields;
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,

And all that echoes to the song of even ,
 All that the mountain's shelt'ring bosom shields,
 And all the dread magnificence of heaven ,
 O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven !

X.

These charms shall work thy soul's eternal health,
 And love, and gentleness, and joy, impart.
 But these thou must renounce, if lust of wealth
 E'er win its way to thy corrupted heart :
 For, ah ! it poisons like a scorpion's dart ;
 Prompting th' ungen'rous wish, the selfish scheme,
 The stern resolve unmoved by pity's smart,
 The troublous day, and long distressful dream.
 Return my roving Muse, resume thy purposed theme.

XI.

There lived in Gothic days, as legends tell,
 A shepherd-swain, a man of low degree,
 Whose sires, perchance, in Fairyland might
 dwell,
 Sicilian groves, or vales of Arcady ;
 But he, I ween, was of the north countrie* :

* There is hardly an ancient ballad, or romance, wherein a Minstrel or Harper appears, but he is characterised, by way of eminence, to have been « OF THE NORTH COUNTRIE.» It is probable that under this appellation were formerly comprehended all the provinces to the north of the Trent.

See PERCY's Essay on the English Minstrels.

A nation famed for song, and beauty's charms;
Zealous, yet modest; innocent, though free;
Patient of toil; serene amidst alarms;
Inflexible in faith; invincible in arms.

XII.

The shepherd-swain of whom I mention made
On Scotia's mountains fed his little flock;
The sickle, scythe, or plough, he never sway'd;
An honest heart was almost all his stock;
His drink, the living water from the rock:
The milky dams supplied his board, and lent
Their kindly fleece to baffle winter's shock;
And he, though oft with dust and sweat besprent,
Did guide and guard their wand'rings whereso'er
they went.

XIII.

From labour health, from health contentment
springs:
Contentment opes the source of every joy.
He envied not, he never thought of, kings;
Nor from those appetites sustain'd annoy,
That chance may frustrate, or indulgence cloy:
Nor Fate his calm and humble hopes beguil'd;
He mourn'd no recreant friend, nor mistress coy,
For on his vows the blameless Phœbe smil'd,
And her alone he loved, and loved her from a child.

XIV.

No jealousy their dawn of love o'ercast,
Nor blasted were their wedded days with strife;
Each season look'd delightful, as it past,
To the fond husband, and the faithful wife.
Beyond the lowly vale of shepherd life
They never roam'd, secure beneath the storm,
Which in ambition's lofty land is rife,
Where peace and love are canker'd by the worm
Of pride, each bud of joy industrious to deform.

XV.

The wight, whose tale these artless lines unfold,
Was all the offspring of this humble pair:
His birth no oracle or seer foretold;
No prodigy appear'd in earth or air,
Nor aught that might a strange event declare.
You guess each circumstance of EDWIN'S birth;
The parent's transport, and the parent's care;
The gossip's prayer for wealth, and wit, and
worth;
And one long summer-day of indolence and mirth.

XVI.

And yet poor Edwin was no vulgar boy;
Deep thought oft seem'd to fix his infant eye.
Dainties he heeded not, nor gaude, nor toy,
Save one short pipe of rudest minstrelsy.

Silent when glad; affectionate, though shy;
And now his look was most demurely sad;
And now he laugh'd aloud, yet none knew why.
The neighbours stared and sigh'd, yet bless'd the
lad:

Some deem'd him wondrous wise, and some be-
lieved him mad.

XVII.

But why should I his childish feats display?
Concourse, and noise, and toil, he ever fled;
Nor cared to mingle in the clam'rous fray
Of squabbling imps; but to the forest sped,
Or roam'd at large the lonely mountain's head,
Or, where the maze of some bewilder'd stream
To deep untrodden groves his footsteps led,
There would he wander wild, till Phœbus' beam,
Shot from the western cliff, released the weary team.

XVIII.

Th' exploit of strength, dexterity, or speed,
To him nor vanity nor joy could bring.
His heart, from cruel sport estranged, would bleed
To work the wo of any living thing
By trap, or net, by arrow, or by sling;
These he detested, those he scorn'd to wield:
He wish'd to be the guardian, not the king,
Tyrant far less, or traitor of the field.
And sure the sylvan reign unbloody joy might yield.

XIX.

Lo! where the stripling, rapt in wonder, roves
Beneath the precipice o'erhung with pine;
And sees, on high, amidst th' encircling groves,
From cliff to cliff the foaming torrents shine;
While waters, woods, and winds, in concert join,
And Echo swells the chorus to the skies:
Would Edwin this majestic scene resign
For aught the huntsman's puny craft supplies?
Ah! no: he better knows great Nature's charms to
prize.

XX.

And oft he traced the uplands to survey,
When o'er the sky advanc'd the kindling dawn,
The crimson cloud, blue main, and mountain
grey,
And lake dim-gleaming on the smoky lawn;
Far to the west, the long, long vale withdrawn,
Where twilight loves to linger for a while;
And now he faintly kens the bounding fawn,
And villager abroad at early toil.
But, lo! the sun appears! and heaven, earth, ocean,
smile.

XXI.

And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb
When all in mist the world below was lost.
What dreadful pleasure! there to stand sublime,
Like shipwreck'd mariner on desert coast,
And view th' enormous waste of vapour, tost

In billows, length'ning to th' horizon round,
Now scoop'd in gulfs, with mountains now emboss'd!

And hear the voice of mirth and song rebound,
Flocks, herds, and waterfalls, along the hoar profound!

XXII.

In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
Fond of each gentle, and each dreadful scene.
In darkness, and in storm, he found delight,
Nor less than when on ocean-wave serene
The southern sun diffused his dazzling shene.
Ev'n sad vicissitude amused his soul:
And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
A sigh, a tear so sweet, he wish'd not to control.

XXIII.

« O ye wild groves! O where is now your bloom »
(The Muse interprets thus his tender thought)
« Your flowers, your verdure, and your balmy gloom,
« Of late so grateful in the hour of drought?
« Why do the birds, that song and rapture brought
« To all your bowers, their mansions now forsake?
« Ah! why has fickle chance this ruin wrought?
« For now the storm howls mournful through the brake,
« And the dead foliage flies in many a shapeless flake.

XXIV.

« Where now the rill, melodious, pure, and cool,
« And meads, with life, and mirth, and beauty
crown'd?
« Ah see! th' unsightly slime, and sluggish pool,
« Have all the solitary vale imbrown'd;
« Fled each fair form, and mute each melting
sound.
« The raven croaks forlorn on naked spray;
« And, hark! the river, bursting every mound,
« Down the vale thunders, and with wasteful sway,
« Uproots the grove, and rolls the shatter'd rocks
away.

XXV.

« Yet such the destiny of all on earth:
« So flourishes and fades majestic man.
« Fair is the bud his vernal morn brings forth,
« And fost'ring gales awhile the nursling fan.
« O smile, ye heavens, serene! ye mildews wan,
« Ye blighting whirlwinds, spare his balmy prime,
« Nor lessen of his life the little span!
« Borne on the swift, though silent, wings of Time,
« Old-age comes on apace to ravage all the clime.

XXVI.

« And be it so: let those deplore their doom,
« Whose hope still grovels in this dark sojourn.
« But lofty souls, who look beyond the tomb,
« Can smile at Fate, and wonder how they mourn.

« Shall spring to these sad scenes no more return ?
 « Is yonder wave the sun's eternal bed ?
 « Soon shall the orient with new lustre burn,
 « And spring shall soon her vital influence shed,
 « Again attune the grove, again adorn the mead.

XXVII.

« Shall I be left abandon'd in the dust
 « When Fate, relenting, lets the flower revive?
 « Shall nature's voice, to man alone unjust,
 « Bid him, though doom'd to perish, hope to live?
 « Is it for this fair Virtue oft must strive
 « With disappointment, penury, and pain?
 « No: Heaven's immortal spring shall yet arrive;
 « And man's majestic beauty bloom again,
 « Bright through th' eternal year of Love's triumphant reign.»

XXVIII.

This truth sublime his simple sire had taught:
 In sooth 'twas almost all the shepherd knew.
 No subtle nor superfluous lore he sought,
 Nor ever wish'd his Edwin to pursue.
 « Let man's own sphere (quoth he) confine his
 view :
 « Be man's peculiar work his sole delight. »
 And much, and oft, he warn'd him to eschew
 Falsehood and guile, and aye maintain the right,
 By pleasure unseduced, unawed by lawless might.

XXIX.

« And, from the prayer of Want, and plaint of
« O never, never turn away thine ear! [Wo,
« Forlorn in this bleak wilderness below,
« Ah! what were man, should Heaven refuse to
« To others do (the law is not severe) [hear!
« What to thyself thou wishest to be done.
« Forgive thy foes and love thy parents dear,
« And friends, and native land; nor those alone—
« All human weal and wo learn thou to make thine
own.»

XXX.

See, in the rear of the warm sunny shower,
The visionary boy from shelter fly!
For now the storm of summer-rain is o'er,
And cool, and fresh, and fragrant is the sky.
And, lo! in the dark east, expanded high,
The rainbow brightens to the setting sun!
Fond fool that deem'st the streaming glory nigh!
How vain the chace thine ardor has begun!
'Tis fled afar ere half thy purposed race be run.

XXXI.

Yet couldst thou learn, that thus it fares with age,
When pleasure, wealth, or power, the bosom
warm,
This baffled hope might tame thy manhood's rage,
And Disappointment of her sting disarm.

But why should foresight thy fond heart alarm?
Perish the lore that deadens young desire!
Pursue, poor imp, th' imaginary charm,
Indulge gay Hope, and Fancy's pleasing fire!
Fancy and Hope too soon shall of themselves expire.

XXXII.

When the long-sounding curfew from afar
Loaded with loud lament the lonely gale,
Young Edwin, lighted by the evening star,
Ling'ring and list'ning wander'd down the vale:
There would he dream of graves, and corses pale;
And ghosts that to the charnel-dungeon throng,
And drag a length of clanking chain, and wail,
Till silenced by the owl's terrific song,
Or blast that shrieks by fits the shudd'ring isles along.

XXXIII.

Or, when the setting moon, in crimson dyed,
Hung o'er the dark and melancholy deep,
To haunted stream, remote from man, he hied,
Where Fays of yore their revels wont to keep;
And there let Fancy roam at large till sleep
A vision brought to his entranced sight.
And first, a wildly murm'ring wind 'gan creep
Shrill to his ringing ear; then tapers bright,
With instantaneous gleam, illumed the vault of
night!

XXXIV.

Anon in view a portal's blazon'd arch
Arose ; the trumpet bids the valves unfold ;
And forth an host of little warriors march ,
Grasping the diamond lance , and targe of gold.
Their look was gentle , their demeanour bold ,
And green their helms , and green their silk attire ;
And here and there , right venerably old ,
The long-robed minstrels wake the warbling wire ,
And some with mellow breath the martial pipe in-
spire.

XXXV.

With merriment , and song , and timbrels clear ,
A troop of dames from myrtle bow'rs advance ;
The little warriors doff the targe and spear ,
And loud enliv'ning strains provoke the dance.
They meet , they dart away , they wheel askance ;
To right , to left , they thrid the flying maze ;
Now bound aloft with vig'rous spring , then glance
Rapid along : with many-colour'd rays
Of tapers , gems , and gold , the echoing forests blaze !

XXXVI.

The dream is fled. Proud harbinger of day ,
Who scar'dst the vision with thy clarion shrill ,
Fell chanticleer ! who oft hast reft away
My fancied good , and brought substantial ill !

O to thy cursed scream, discordant still,
Let harmony aye shut her gentle ear!
Thy boastful mirth let jealous rivals spill,
Insult thy crest, and glossy pinions tear,
And ever in thy dreams the ruthless fox appear!

XXXVII.

Forbear, my Muse! Let Love attune thy line!
Revoke the spell! Thine Edwin frets not so.
For how should he at wicked chance repine,
Who feels from every change amusement flow?
Ev'n now his eyes with smiles of rapture glow,
As on he wanders through the scenes of morn,
Where the fresh flowers in living lustre blow,
Where thousand pearls the dewy lawns adorn,
A thousand notes of joy in every breeze are born.

XXXVIII.

But who the melodies of morn can tell?
The wild brook babbling down the mountain side;
The lowing herd; the sheepfold's simple bell;
The pipe of early shepherd dim descried
In the lone valley; echoing far and wide
The clamorous horn along the cliffs above;
The hollow murmur of the ocean-tide;
The hum of bees, and linnet's lay of love,
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove.

XXXIX.

The cottage-curs at early pilgrim bark ;
Crown'd with her pail the tripping milkmaid sings ;
The whistling plowman stalks afield ; and, hark !
Down the rough slope the pond'rous waggon rings !
Through rustling corn the hare astonish'd springs ;
Slow tolls the village-clock the drowsy hour ;
The partridge bursts away on whirring wings ;
Deep mourns the turtle in sequester'd bower ,
And shrill lark carols clear from her aerial tour.

XL.

O Nature, how in every charm supreme !
Thy vot'ries feast on raptures ever new !
O for the voice and fire of seraphim
To sing thy glories with devotion due !
Blest be the day I 'scaped the wrangling crew,
From Pyrrho's maze, and Epicurus' sty,
And held high converse with the godlike few,
Who to th' enraptur'd heart, and ear, and eye,
Teach beauty, virtue, truth, and love, and melody !

XLI.

Hence ! ye who snare and stupify the mind,
Sophists, of beauty, virtue, joy, the bane !
Greedy and fell, though impotent and blind,
Who spread your filthy nets in Truth's fair fane,
And ever ply your venom'd fangs amain !

Hence to dark Error's den, whose rankling slime
First gave you form! Hence! lest the Muse
 should deign
(Though loath on theme so mean to waste a
 rhyme)
With vengeance to pursue your sacrilegious crime.

XLII.

But hail, ye mighty masters of the lay,
Nature's true sons, the friends of man and truth!
Whose song, sublimely sweet, serenely gay,
Amused my childhood, and inform'd my youth.
O let your spirit still my bosom sooth,
Inspire my dreams, and my wild wand'rings
 guide!
Your voice each rugged path of life can smooth:
For well I know, where-ever ye reside,
There harmony, and peace, and innocence abide.

XLIII.

Ah me! abandon'd on the lonesome plain,
As yet poor Edwin never knew your lore,
Save when, against the winter's drenching rain,
And driving snow, the cottage shut the door.
Then, as instructed by tradition hoar,
Her legends when the Beldame 'gan impart,
Or chant the old heroic ditty o'er,
Wonder and joy ran thrilling to his heart;
Much he the tale admired, but more the tuneful art.

XLIV.

Various and strange was the long-winded tale ;
 And halls , and knights , and feats of arms , display'd ;
 Or merry swains , who quaff the nut-brown ale ,
 And sing , enamour'd of the nut-brown maid ;
 The moon-light revel of the fairy glade ;
 Or hags that suckle an infernal brood ,
 And ply in caves th' unutterable trade , *
 'Midst fiends and spectres , quench the moon in blood ,
 Yell in the midnight storm , or ride th' infuriate flood.

XLV.

But when to horror his amazement rose ,
 A gentler strain the Beldame would rehearse ,
 A tale of rural life , a tale of woes ,
 The orphan-babes , and guardian uncle fierce.
 O cruel ! will no pang of pity pierce
 That heart by lust of lucre sear'd to stone !
 For sure , if aught of virtue last , or verse ,
 To latest times shall tender souls bemoan
 Those hopeless orphan-babes by thy fell arts undone.

* Allusion to SHAKESPEARE.

Macbeth. How now , ye secret , black , and midnight hags ,
 What is't you do ?

Witches. A deed WITHOUT A NAME.

MACBETH , Act. 4. Scene 1.

XLVI.

Behold, with berries smear'd, with brambles torn*,
 The babes now famish'd lay them down to die.
 Amidst the howl of darksome woods forlorn,
 Folded in one another's arms they lie;
 Nor friend, nor stranger, hears their dying cry:
 « For from the town the man returns no more. »
 But thou, who Heaven's just vengeance dar'st defy,
 This deed with fruitless tears shalt soon deplore,
 When Death lays waste thy house, and flames consume
 thy store.

XLVII.

A stifled smile of stern vindictive joy
 Brighten'd one moment Edwin's starting tear.
 « But why should gold man's feeble mind decoy,
 « And innocence thus die by doom severe? »
 O Edwin! while thy heart is yet sincere,
 Th' assaults of discontent and doubt repel:
 Dark even at noontide is our mortal sphere,
 But let us hope; to doubt is to rebel;
 Let us exult in hope that all shall yet be well.

XLVIII.

Nor be thy generous indignation check'd,
 Nor check'd the tender tear to Misery given;
 From Guilt's contagious power shall That protect,
 This soften and refine the soul for Heaven.

* See the fine old ballad, called, THE CHILDREN IN THE
 WOOD.

But dreadful is their doom, whom doubt has
driven
To censure Fate, and pious Hope forego:
Like yonder blasted boughs by lightning riven,
Perfection, beauty, life, they never know,
But frown on all that pass, a monument of wo.

XLIX.

Shall he, whose birth, maturity, and age,
Scarce fill the circle of one summer day,
Shall the poor gnat with discontent and rage
Exclaim, that Nature hastens to decay,
If but a cloud obstruct the solar ray,
If but a momentary shower descend!
Or shall frail man Heaven's dread decree gainsay,
Which bade the series of events extend
Wide through unnumber'd worlds, and ages with-
out end!

L.

One part, one little part, we dimly scan
Through the dark medium of life's fev'rish
dream;
Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,
If but that little part incongruous seem.
Nor is that part perhaps what mortals deem;
Oft from apparent ill our blessings rise.
O then renounce that impious self-esteem,
That aims to trace the secrets of the skies:
For thou art but of dust; be humble, and be wise!

LI.

Thus Heaven enlarged his soul in riper years.
For Nature gave him strength and fire to soar
On Fancy's wing above this vale of tears;
Where dark cold-hearted skeptics, creeping, pore
Through microscope of metaphysic lore:
And much they grope for truth, but never hit.
For why? their powers, inadequate before,
This art prepost'rous renders more unfit;
Yet deem they darkness light, and their vain blun-
ders wit.

LII.

Nor was this ancient dame a foe to mirth.
Her ballad, jest, and riddle's quaint device
Oft cheer'd the shepherds round their social
hearth,
Whom levity or spleen could ne'er entice
To purchase chat or laughter at the price
Of decency. Nor let it faith exceed
That Nature forms a rustic taste so nice.
Ah! had they been of court or city breed,
Such delicacy were right marvellous indeed!

LIII.

Oft when the winter-storm had ceased to rave,
He roam'd the snowy waste at even, to view
The cloud stupendous, from th' Atlantic wave
High-towering, sail along th' horizon blue:

Where 'midst the changeful scen'ry ever new
Fancy a thousand wondrous forms describes
More wildly great than ever pencil drew,
Rocks, torrents, gulfs, and shapes of giant size,
And glitt'ring cliffs on cliffs, and fiery ramparts rise.

LIV.

Thence musing onward to the sounding shore,
The lone enthusiast oft would take his way,
List'ning with pleasing dread to the deep roar
Of the wide-welt'ring waves. In black array
When sulph'rous clouds roll'd on the vernal day,
Even then he hasten'd from the haunt of man,
Along the trembling wilderness to stray,
What time the lightning's fierce career began,
And o'er Heaven's rending arch the rattling thunder
ran.

LV.

Responsive to the sprightly pipe when all
In sprightly dance the village-youth were join'd,
Edwin, of melody aye held in thrall,
From the rude gambol far remote reclined,
Sooth'd with the soft notes warbling in the wind.
Ah then, all jollity seem'd noise and folly
To the pure soul by Fancy's fire refined:
Ah what is mirth, but turbulence unholy,
When with the charm compared of heavenly me-
lancholy!

LVI.

Is there a heart that music cannot melt?
Alas! how is that rugged heart forlorn!
Is there who ne'er those mystic transports felt
Of solitude and melancholy born?
He needs not woo the Muse; he is her scorn.
The sophist's rope of cobweb he shall twine;
Mope o'er the schoolman's peevish page, or
mourn,
And delve for life in Mammon's dirty mine;
Sneak with the scoundrel fox, or grunt with glutton
swine.

LVII.

For Edwin Fate a nobler doom had plann'd;
Song was his favourite and first pursuit.
The wild harp rang to his advent'rous hand,
And languish'd to his breath the plaintive flute.
His infant muse, though artless, was not mute:
Of elegance as yet he took no care;
For this of time and culture is the fruit;
And Edwin gain'd at last this fruit so rare;
As in some future verse I purpose to declare.

LVIII.

Meanwhile, whate'er of beautiful, or new,
Sublime, or dreadful, in earth, sea, or sky,
By chance, or search, was offer'd to his view,
He scann'd with curious and romantic eye.

Whate'er of lore tradition could supply
 From Gothic tale, or song or fable old,
 Roused him, still keen to listen and to pry.
 At last, though long by penury control'd,
 And solitude, his soul her graces 'gan unfold.

LIX.

Thus on the chill Lapponian's dreary land,
 For many a long month lost in snow profound,
 When Sol from Cancer sends the season bland,
 And in their northern cave the storms are bound;
 From silent mountains, straight, with startling
 sound,
 Torrents are hurl'd; green hills emerge; and lo!
 The trees with foliage, cliffs with flowers are
 crown'd;
 Pure rills through vales of verdure warbling go;
 And wonder, love, and joy, the peasant's heart
 o'erflow*.

LX.

Here pause, my Gothic lyre, a little while.
 The leisure hour is all that thou canst claim.
 But if ***** on this labour smile,
 New strains erelong shall animate thy frame.

* Spring and Autumn are hardly known to the Laplanders. About the time the Sun enters Cancer, their fields, which a week before were covered with snow, appear on a sudden full of grass and flowers.

SCHAEFFER'S History of Lapland, p. 16.

And his applause to me is more than fame;
For still with truth accords his taste refined.
At lucre or renown let others aim,
I only wish to please the gentle mind,
Whom nature's charms inspire, and love of hu-
man-kind.



THE
 MINSTREL;
 OR,
 THE PROGRESS OF GENIUS.

THE SECOND BOOK.

I.

Of chance or change O let not man complain,
 Else shall he never, never cease to wail!
 For, from the imperial dome, to where the swain
 Rears the lone cottage in the silent dale,
 All feel th' assault of fortune's fickle gale;
 Art, empire, earth itself, to change are doom'd;
 Earthquakes have raised to heaven th' humble
 vale,
 And gulphs the mountain's mighty mass entomb'd,
 And where th' Atlantic rolls wide continents have
 bloom'd*.

II.

But sure to foreign climes we need not range,
 Nor search the ancient records of our race,
 To learn the dire effects of time and change,
 Which in ourselves, alas! we daily trace.

* See PLATO's Timeus.

Yet at the darken'd eye, the wither'd face,
Or hoary hair, I never will repine:
But spare, O Time, whate'er of mental grace,
Of candour, love, or sympathy divine,
Whate'er of fancy's ray, or friendship's flame is
mine!

III.

So I, obsequious to Truth's dread command,
Shall here without reluctance change my lay,
And smite the Gothic lyre with harsher hand;
Now when I leave that flowery path for aye
Of childhood, where I sported many a day,
Warbling and saunt'ring carelessly along;
Where every face was innocent and gay,
Each vale romantic, tuneful every tongue,
Sweet, wild, and artless all, as Edwin's infant song.

IV.

« Perish the lore that deadens young desire, »
Is the soft tenor of my song no more.
Edwin, though lov'd of heaven, must not aspire
To bliss, which mortals never knew before.
On trembling wings let youthful fancy soar,
Nor always haunt the sunny realms of joy:
But now and then the shades of life explore;
Though many a sound and sight of woe annoy,
And many a qualm of care his rising hopes destroy.

V.

Vigour from toil, from trouble patience grows.
The weakly blossom, warm in summer bower,
Some tints of transient beauty may disclose;
But ah! it withers in the chilling hour.
Mark yonder oaks! Superior to the power
Of all the warring winds of heaven they rise,
And from the stormy promontory tower,
And toss their giant arms amid the skies,
While each assailing blast increase of strength
supplies.

VI.

And now the downy cheek and deepen'd voice
Gave dignity to Edwin's blooming prime;
And walks of wider circuit were his choice,
And vales more wild, and mountains more sublime.
One evening, as he framed the careless rhyme,
It was his chance to wander far abroad,
And o'er a lonely eminence to climb,
Which heretofore his foot had never trode;
A vale appear'd below, a deep retired abode.

VII.

Thither he hied, enamour'd of the scene.
For rocks on rocks pil'd, as by magic spell,
Here scorch'd with lightning, there with ivy green,
Fenc'd from the north and east this savage dell.

Southward a mountain rose with easy swell,
Whose long, long groves eternal murmur made:
And toward the western sun a streamlet fell,
Where, through the cliffs, the eye, remote,
survey'd
Blue hills, and glitt'ring waves, and skies in gold
array'd.

VIII.

Along this narrow valley you might see
The wild deer sporting on the meadow ground,
And, here and there, a solitary tree,
Or mossy stone, or rock with woodbine crown'd.
Oft did the cliffs reverberate the sound
Of parted fragments tumbling from on high;
And from the summit of that craggy mound
The perching eagle oft was heard to cry,
Or on resounding wings to shoot athwart the sky.

IX.

One cultivated spot there was, that spread
Its flowery bosom to the noonday beam,
Where many a rose-bud rears its blushing head,
And herbs for food with future plenty teem.
Sooth'd by the lulling sound of grove and stream,
Romantic visions swarm on Edwin's soul:
He minded not the sun's last trembling gleam,
Nor heard from far the twilight curfew toll;
When slowly on his ear these moving accents stole.

X.

« Hail, awful scenes, that calm the troubled breast,
 « And woo the weary to profound repose !
 « Can passion's wildest uproar lay to rest,
 « And whisper comfort to the man of woes !
 « Here Innocence may wander, safe from foes,
 « And Contemplation soar on seraph's wings.
 « O Solitude, the man who thee foregoes,
 « When lucre lures him, or ambition stings,
 « Shall never know the source whence real grandeur
 springs.

XI.

« Vain man ! is grandeur giv'n to gay attire ?
 « Then let the butterfly thy pride upbraid :
 « To friends, attendants, armies, bought with hire ?
 « It is thy weakness that requires their aid :
 « To palaces with gold and gems inlay'd ?
 « They fear the thief, and tremble in the storm :
 « To hosts through carnage who to conquest
 wade ?
 « Behold the victor vanquish'd by the worm !
 « Behold what deeds of woe the locust can perform !

XII.

« True dignity is his, whose tranquil mind
 « Virtue has raised above the things below ;
 « Who, every hope and fear to heaven resign'd,
 « Shrinks not though Fortune aim her deadliest
 blow. » —

This strain from midst the rocks was heard to flow
In solemn sounds. Now beam'd the evening star;
And from embattled clouds emerging slow
Cynthia came riding on her silver car;
And hoary mountain-cliffs shone faintly from afar.

XIII.

Soon did the solemn voice its theme renew,
While Edwin rapt in wonder list'ning stood.
« Ye tools and toys of tyranny, adieu,
« Scorn'd by the wise, and hated by the good!
« Ye only can engage the servile brood
« Of Levity and Lust, who, all their days,
« Ashamed of truth and liberty, have woo'd,
« And hugg'd the chain that, glittering on their
gaze,
« Seems to outshine the pomp of heaven's empyreal
blaze.

XIV.

« Like them, abandon'd to Ambition's sway,
« I sought for glory in the paths of guile;
« And fawn'd and smiled to plunder and betray,
« Myself betray'd and plunder'd all the while;
« So gnaw'd the viper the corroding file.
« But now with pangs of keen remorse I rue
« Those years of trouble and debasement vile.
« Yet why should I this cruel theme pursue?
« Fly, fly, detested thoughts, for ever, from my view!

XV.

« The gusts of appetite , the clouds of care ,
« And storms of disappointment, all o'erpast ,
« Henceforth no earthly hope with heaven shall
share
« This heart where peace serenely shines at last.
« And if for me no treasure be amass'd ,
« And if no future age shall hear my name ,
« I lurk the more secure from fortune's blast ,
« And with more leisure feed this pious flame ,
« Whose rapture far transcends the fairest hopes
of fame.

XVI.

« The end and the reward of toil is rest.
« Be all my prayer for virtue and for peace !
« Of wealth and fame , of pomp and power pos-
sess'd ,
« Whoever felt his weight of woe decrease !
« Ah ! what avails the lore of Rome and Greece ,
« The lay heaven-prompted , and harmonious
« The dust of Ophir, or the Tyrian fleece, [string,
« All that art, fortune, enterprise, can bring,
« If envy , scorn , remorse , or pride the bosom
wring!

XVII.

« Let Vanity adorn the marble tomb
« With trophies, rhymes, and scutcheons of renown,
« In the deep dungeon of some Gothic dome,
« Where night and desolation ever frown!

« Mine be the breezy hill that skirts the down,
« Where a green grassy turf is all I crave,
« With here and there a violet bestrown,
« Fast by a brook, or fountain's murm'ring wave;
« And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my
grave!

XVIII.

« And thither let the village swain repair,
« And, light of heart, the village maiden gay,
« To deck with flowers her half-dishevel'd hair,
« And celebrate the merry morn of May.
« There let the shepherd's pipe the live-long day
« Fill all the grove with love's bewitching wo;
« And when mild Evening comes with mantle
grey,
« Let not the blooming band make haste to go;
« No ghost nor spell my long and last abode shall
know.

XIX.

« For though I fly to scape from Fortune's rage,
« And bear the scars of envy, spite, and scorn,
« Yet with mankind no horrid war I wage,
« Yet with no impious spleen my breast is torn:
« For virtue lost, and ruin'd man, I mourn.
« O Man, creation's pride, heaven's darling child,
« Whom nature's best, divinest gifts adorn,
« Why from thy home are truth and joy exiled,
« And all thy favourite haunts with blood and tears
defiled!

XX.

« Along yon glittering sky what glory streams!
 « What majesty attends Night's lovely queen!
 « Fair laugh our vallies in the vernal beams;
 « And mountains rise, and oceans roll between;
 « And all conspire to beautify the scene.
 « But, in the mental world, what chaos drear!
 « What forms of mournful, loathsome, furious
 « O when shall that Eternal Morn appear [mien!
 « These dreadful forms to chase, this chaos dark
 to clear!

XXI.

« O Thou, at whose creative smile, yon heaven,
 « In all the pomp of beauty, life, and light,
 « Rose from th' abyss; when dark Confusion,
 driven
 « Down, down the bottomless profound of night,
 « Fled where he ever flies thy piercing sight!
 « O glance on these sad shades one pitying ray
 « To blast the fury of oppressive might!
 « Melt the hard heart to love and mercy's sway,
 « And cheer the wand'ring soul, and light him on
 the way! »

XXII.

Silence ensued: and Edwin raised his eyes
 In tears, for grief lay heavy at his heart.
 « And is it thus in courtly life (he cries)
 « That man to man acts a betrayer's part?

« And dares he thus the gifts of heaven pervert,
 « Each social instinct, and sublime desire!
 « Hail Poverty! if honour, wealth, and art,
 « If what the great pursue, and learn'd admire,
 « Thus dissipate and quench the soul's ethereal fire!»

XXIII.

He said, and turn'd away; nor did the Sage
 O'erhear, in silent orisons employ'd.
 The Youth, his rising sorrow to assuage,
 Home as he hied, the evening scene enjoy'd:
 For now no cloud obscures the starry void;
 The yellow moonlight sleeps on all the hills;
 Nor is the mind with startling sounds annoy'd:
 A soothing murmur the lone region fills
 Of groves, and dying gales, and melancholy rills.

XXIV.

But he from day to day more anxious grew.
 The voice still seem'd to vibrate on his ear:
 Nor durst he hope the Hermit's tale untrue;
 For man he seem'd to love, and heaven to fear;
 And none speaks false where there is none to hear.
 « Yet can man's gentle heart become so fell!
 « No more in vain conjecture let me wear
 « My hours away, but seek the Hermit's cell;
 « 'Tis he my doubt can clear, perhaps my care dis-
 pel.»

XXV.

At early dawn the Youth his journey took,
And many a mountain pass'd, and valley wide;
Then reach'd the wild, where, in a flow'ry nook,
And seated on a mossy stone, he spied
An ancient man: his harp lay him beside.
A stag sprang from the pasture at his call,
And, kneeling, lick'd the wither'd hand that tied
A wreath of woodbine round his antlers tall,
And hung his lofty neck with many a flowret small.

XXVI.

And now the hoary Sage arose, and saw
The wanderer approaching: innocence
Smiled on his glowing cheek, but modest awe
Depress'd his eye that fear'd to give offence.
« Who art thou, courteous stranger? and from
whence?
« Why roam thy steps to this abandon'd dale?»
« A shepherd-boy, the Youth replied; far hence
« My habitation; hear my artless tale;
« Nor levity nor falsehood shall thine ear assail.

XXVII.

« Late as I roam'd, intent on Nature's charms,
« I reach'd at eve this wilderness profound;
« And, leaning where yon oak expands her arms,
« Heard these rude cliffs thine awful voice re-
bound;

« For in thy speech I recognise the sound.
« You mourn'd for ruin'd man, and virtue lost,
« And seem'd to feel of keen remorse the wound,
« Pond'ring on former days by guilt engross'd,
« Or in the giddy storm of dissipation toss'd.

XXVIII.

« But say, in courtly life can craft be learn'd,
« Where knowledge opens, and exalts the soul?
« Where Fortune lavishes her gifts unearn'd,
« Can selfishness the lib'ral heart control?
« Is glory there achiev'd by arts as foul
« As those which felons, fiends, and furies plan?
« Spiders ensnare, snakes poison, tygers prowl;
« Love is the godlike attribute of man.
« O teach a simple youth this mystery to scan!

XXIX.

« Or else the lamentable strain disclaim,
« And give me back the calm, contented mind,
« Which, late, exulting, view'd in Nature's frame,
« Goodness untainted, wisdom unconfined,
« Grace, grandeur, and utility combined.
« Restore those tranquil days that saw me still
« Well pleased with all, but most with human-kind;
« When fancy roam'd through Nature's works at will,
« Uncheck'd by cold distrust, and uninform'd of ill.»

XXX.

« Wouldst thou (the Sage replied) in peace return
« To the gay dreams of fond romantic youth,
« Leave me to hide, in this remote sojourn,
« From every gentle ear the dreadful truth:
« For if my desultory strain with ruth
« And indignation make thine eyes o'erflow,
« Alas! what comfort could thy anguish sooth,
« Shouldst thou th' extent of human folly know!
« Be ignorance thy choice where knowledge leads
to wo.

XXXI.

« But let untender thoughts afar be driven;
« Nor venture to arraign the dread decree.
« For know, to man, as candidate for heaven,
« The voice of THE ETERNAL said, BE FREE:
« And this divine prerogative to thee
« Does virtue, happiness, and heaven convey;
« For virtue is the child of liberty,
« And happiness of virtue; nor can they
« Be free to keep the path who are not free to stray.

XXXII.

« Yet leave me not: I would allay that grief,
« Which else might thy young virtue overpower;
« And in thy converse I shall find relief,
« When the dark shades of melancholy lower;

« For solitude has many a dreary hour,
 « Even when exempt from grief, remorse, and pain:
 « Come often then; for, haply, in my bower,
 « Amazement, knowledge, wisdom thou may'st
 gain:
 « If I one soul improve, I have not lived in vain.»

XXXIII.

And now, at length, to Edwin's ardent gaze
 The Muse of history unrols her page.
 But few, alas! the scenes her art displays
 To charm his fancy, or his heart engage.
 Here Chiefs their thirst of power in blood assuage,
 And straight their flames with tenfold fierceness
 burn:
 Here smiling Virtue prompts the patriot's rage;
 But lo! ere long is left alone to mourn,
 And languish in the dust, and clasp th' abandon'd urn.

XXXIV.

« Ah, what avails (he said) to trace the springs
 « That whirl of empire the stupendous wheel!
 « Ah! what have I to do with conqu'ring kings,
 « Hands drench'd in blood, and breasts begirt
 with steel!
 « To those, whom Nature taught to think and feel,
 « Heroes, alas! are things of small concern.
 « Could History man's secret heart reveal,
 « And what imports a heaven-born mind to learn,
 « Her transcripts to explore what bosom would not
 yearn!

XXXV.

- « This praise, O Cheronean Sage*, is thine.
« (Why should this praise to thee alone belong)?
« All else from Nature's moral path decline,
« Lured by the toys that captivate the throng,
« To herd in cabinets and camps, among
« Spoil, carnage, and the cruel pomp of pride;
« Or chaunt of heraldry the drowsy song,
« How tyrant blood, o'er many a region wide,
« Rolls to a thousand thrones its execrable tide!

XXXVI.

- « O who of man the story will unfold,
« Ere victory and empire wrought annoy,
« In that elysian age (misnamed of gold)
« The age of love, and innocence, and joy,
« When all were great and free! man's sole em-
« To deck the bosom of his parent earth; [ploy
« Or toward his bower the murm'ring stream
 decoy,
« To aid the flowret's long-expected birth,
« And lull the bed of peace, and crown the board
 of mirth.

XXXVII.

- « Sweet were your shades, O ye primeval groves,
« Whose boughs to man his food and shelter lent,
« Pure in his pleasures, happy in his loves,
« His eye still smiling, and his heart content.

* PLUTARCH.

- « Then, hand in hand, Health, Sport, and Labour went :
 « Nature supply'd the wish she taught to crave.
 « None prowl'd for prey, none watch'd to circumvent.
 « To all an equal lot Heaven's bounty gave :
 « No vassal fear'd his lord, no tyrant fear'd his slave.

XXXVIII.

- « But ah! th' Historic Muse has never dared
 « To pierce those hallow'd bowers : 'tis Fancy's beam,
 « Pour'd on the vision of th' enraptured Bard,
 « That paints the charms of that delicious theme.
 « Then hail sweet Fancy's ray! and hail the dream
 « That weans the weary soul from guilt and wo!
 « Careless what others of my choice may deem,
 « I long where Love and Fancy lead to go,
 « And meditate on heaven; Enough of earth I know.

XXXIX.

- « I cannot blame thy choice (the Sage replied)
 « For soft and smooth are Fancy's flow'ry ways.
 « And yet, even there, if left without a guide,
 « The young adventurer unsafely plays.
 « Eyes, dazzled long by Fiction's gaudy rays,
 « In modest Truth nor light nor beauty find.

- « And who, my child, would trust the meteor-
blaze,
« That soon must fail, and leave the wanderer
blind,
« More dark, and helpless far than if it ne'er had
shined?

XL.

- « Fancy enervates, while it soothes, the heart,
« And, while it dazzles, wounds the mental sight:
« To joy each height'ning charm it can impart,
« But wraps the hour of wo in tenfold night.
« And often, where no real ills affright,
« Its visionary fiends, an endless train,
« Assail with equal or superior might,
« And through the throbbing heart, and dizzy
brain,
« And shiv'ring nerves, shoot stings of more than
mortal pain.

XLI.

- « And yet, alas! the real ills of life
« Claim the full vigour of a mind prepared,
« Prepared for patient, long, laborious strife,
« Its guide Experience, and Truth its guard.
« We fare on earth as other men have fared.
« Were they successful? Let us not despair.
« Was disappointment oft their sole reward?
« Yet shall their tale instruct if it declare
« How they have borne the load ourselves are doom'd
to bear.

XLII.

- « What charms th' Historic Muse adorn, from
 spoils,
 « And blood, and tyrants, when she wings her
 flight,
 « To hail the patriot Prince, whose pious toils
 « Sacred to science, liberty and right,
 « And peace, through every age divinely bright
 « Shall shine the boast and wonder of mankind!
 « Sees yonder sun, from his meridian height,
 « A lovelier scene than Virtue thus inshrined
 « In power, and man with man for mutual aid
 combined?

XLIII.

- « Hail sacred Polity, by Freedom rear'd!
 « Hail sacred Freedom, when by Law restrain'd!
 « Without you what were man? A groveling herd
 « In darkness, wretchedness, and want enchain'd.
 « Sublimed by you, the Greek and Roman reign'd
 « In arts unrivall'd: O, to latest days,
 « In Albion may your influence, unprofaned,
 « To godlike worth the generous bosom raise,
 « And prompt the Sage's lore, and fire the Poet's
 lays!

XLIV.

- « But now let other themes our care engage.
 « For lo! with modest yet majestic grace,
 « To curb Imagination's lawless rage,
 « And from within the cherish'd heart to brace,

« Philosophy appears ! The gloomy race ,
« By indolence and moping Fancy bred ,
« Fear , Discontent , Solitude give place ,
« And Hope and Courage brighten in their stead ,
« While on the kindling soul her vital beams are
shed.

XLV.

« Then waken from long lethargy to life *
« The seeds of happiness, and powers of thought ;
« Then jarring appetites forego their strife ,
« A strife by ignorance to madness wrought.
« Pleasure by savage man is dearly bought
« With fell revenge , lust that defies control ,
« With gluttony and death. The mind untaught
« Is a dark waste where fiends and tempests howl ;
« As Phebus to the world , is Science to the soul.

XLVI.

« And Reason now through Number, Time, and
Space ,
« Darts the keen lustre of her serious eye ,
« And learns , from facts compared , the laws to
« Whose long progression leads to Deity. [trace,

* The influence of the Philosophic Spirit in humanizing the mind , and preparing it for intellectual exertion and delicate pleasure ; — in exploring , by the help of geometry , the system of the universe ; — in banishing superstition ; — in promoting navigation , agriculture , medicine , and moral and political science : — from Stanza XLV. to Stanza LV.

« Can mortal strength presume to soar so high !
 « Can mortal sight , so oft bedim'd with tears ,
 « Such glory bear ! — for lo ! the shadows fly
 « From nature's face ; Confusion disappears ,
 « And order charms the eyes, and harmony the ears.

XLVII.

« In the deep windings of the grove no more
 « The hag obscene , and grisly phantom dwell ;
 « Nor in the fall of mountain-stream , or roar
 « Of winds , is heard the angry spirit's yell ;
 « No wizard mutters the tremendous spell ,
 « Nor sinks convulsive in prophetic swoon ;
 « Nor bids the noise of drums and trumpets swell
 « To ease of fancied pangs the labouring moon ,
 « Or chace the shade that blots the blazing orb of
 noon.

XLVIII.

« Many a long-ling'ring year, in lonely isle,
 « Stunn'd with th' eternal turbulence of waves ,
 « Lo ! with dim eyes , that never learn'd to smile,
 « And trembling hands , the famish'd native
 craves
 « Of Heaven his wretched fare ! shiv'ring in caves,
 « Or scorch'd on rocks , he pines from day to day ;
 « But Science gives the word ; and lo ! he braves
 « The surge and tempest , lighted by her ray,
 « And to a happier land wafts merrily away.

XLIX.

« And ev'n where Nature loads the teeming plain.
« With the full pomp of vegetable store,
« Her bounty, unimproved, is deadly bane.
« Dark woods, and rankling wilds, from shore to
 shore,
« Stretch their enormous gloom; which to explore
« Ev'n Fancy trembles in her sprightliest mood;
« For there, each eyeball gleams with lust of gore,
« Nestles each murd'rous and each monstrous
 brood,
« Plague lurks in ev'ry shade, and steams from
 ev'ry flood.

L.

« 'Twas from Philosophy man learn'd to tame
« The soil by plenty to intemperance fed.
« Lo! from the echoing ax, and thund'ring flame,
« Poison and plague and yelling rage are fled.
« The waters, bursting from their slimy bed,
« Bring health and melody to every vale:
« And, from the breezy main and mountain's
« Ceres and Flora, to the sunny dale, [head,
« To fan their glowing charms, invite the flutt'ring
 gale.

LI.

« What dire necessities on every hand
« Our art, our strength, our fortitude require!
« Of foes intestine what a numerous band
« Against this little throb of life conspire!

- « Yet Science can elude their fatal ire
« A while, and turn aside Death's level'd dart,
« Sooth the sharp pang, allay the fever's fire,
« And brace the nerves once more, and cheer the
heart;
« And yet a few soft nights and balmy days impart.

LII.

- « Nor less to regulate man's moral frame
« Science exerts her all-composing sway.
« Flutters thy breast with fear, or pants for fame,
« Or pines to Indolence and Spleen a prey,
« Or Avarice, a fiend more fierce than they?
« Flee to the shade of Academus' grove,
« Where cares molest not; discord melts away
« In harmony, and the pure passions prove
« How sweet the words of truth breathed from the
lips of Love.

LIII.

- « What cannot Art and Industry perform,
« When Science plans the progress of their toil!
« They smile at penury, disease, and storm;
« And oceans from their mighty mounds recoil.
« When tyrants scourge, or demagogues embroil
« A land, or when the rabble's headlong rage
« Order transforms to anarchy and spoil,
« Deep-versed in man the philosophic Sage
« Prepares with lenient hand their phrenzy to
assuage.

LIV.

« 'Tis he alone, whose comprehensive mind,
« From situation, temper, soil, and clime
« Explored, a nation's various powers can bind,
« And various orders in one Form sublime
« Of polity, that, midst the wrecks of time,
« Secure shall lift its head on high, nor fear
« Th' assault of foreign or domestic crime ;'
« While public faith, and public love sincere,
« And Industry and Law maintain their sway
severe. »

LV.

Enraptured by the Hermit's strain, the Youth
Proceeds the path of Science to explore.
And now, expanding to the beams of Truth,
New energies, and charms unknown before,
His mind discloses : Fancy now no more
Wantons on fickle pinion through the skies,
But, fix'd in aim, and conscious of her power,
Sublime from cause to cause exults to rise,
Creation's blended stores arranging as she flies.

LVI.

Nor love of novelty alone inspires
Their laws and nice dependencies to scan ;
For, mindful of the aids that life requires,
And of the services man owes to man,

He meditates new arts on Nature's plan;
The cold desponding breast of Sloth to warm,
The flame of Industry and Genius fan,
And Emulation's noble rage alarm,
And the long hours of Toil and Solitude to charm.

LVII.

But She, who set on fire his infant heart,
And all his dreams, and all his wanderings shared,
And bless'd, the Muse, and her celestial art,
Still claim th' Enthusiast's fond and first regard.
From Nature's beauties, variously compared,
And variously combined, he learns to frame
Those forms of bright perfection, which the Bard,
While boundless hopes and boundless views in-
flame,
Enamour'd consecrates to never-dying fame.

LVIII.

Of late, with cumbersome, though pompous show,
Edwin would oft his flow'ry rhyme deface
Through ardour to adorn; but Nature now
To his experienced eye a modest grace
Presents, where Ornament the second place
Holds, to intrinsic worth and just design
Subservient still. Simplicity apace
Tempers his rage: he owns her charm divine,
And clears th' ambiguous phrase, and lops th' un-
wieldy line.

LIX.

Fain would I sing (much yet unsung remains)
What sweet delirium o'er his bosom stole,
When the great Shepherd of the Mantuan plains*
His deep majestic melody 'gan roll!
Fain would I sing what transport storm'd his soul,
How the red current throbb'd his veins along,
When, like Pelides, bold beyond control,
Gracefully terrible, sublimely strong,
Homer raised high to heaven the loud, th' impetuous song!

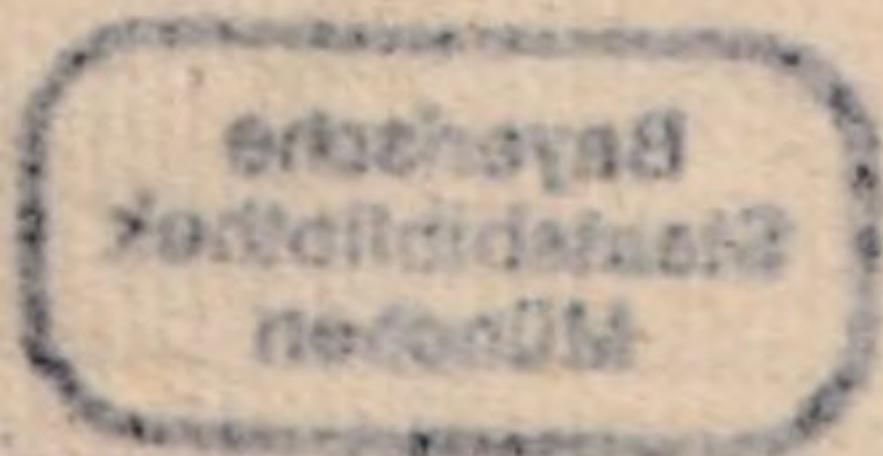
LX.

And how his lyre, though rude her first essays,
Now skill'd to sooth, to triumph, to complain,
Warbling at will through each harmonious maze,
Was taught to modulate the artful strain,
I fain would sing — But ah! I strive in vain:
Sighs from a breaking heart my voice confound.
With trembling step to join yon weeping train
I haste, where gleams funereal glare around,
And, mix'd with shrieks of woe, the knells of death
resound!

LXI.

Adieu, ye lays, that fancy's flowers adorn,
The soft amusement of the vacant mind!
He sleeps in dust, and all the Muses mourn,
He, whom each virtue fired, each grace refined,

* VIRGIL.



Friend, teacher, pattern, darling of mankind! *
 He sleeps in dust. Ah! how should I pursue
 My theme! To heart-consuming grief resign'd
 Here on his recent grave I fix my view,
 And pour my bitter tears. Ye flow'ry lays, adieu!

LXII.

Art thou, my G*****, for ever fled!
 And am I left to unavailing wo!
 When fortune's storms assail this weary head,
 Where cares long since have shed untimely snow,
 Ah! now for comfort whither shall I go!
 No more thy soothing voice my anguish cheers:
 Thy placid eyes with smiles no longer glow
 My hopes to cherish, and allay my fears.
 'Tis meet that I should mourn — flow forth afresh
 my tears!

* This excellent person died suddenly, on the 10th of February 1773. The conclusion of the poem was written a few days after.



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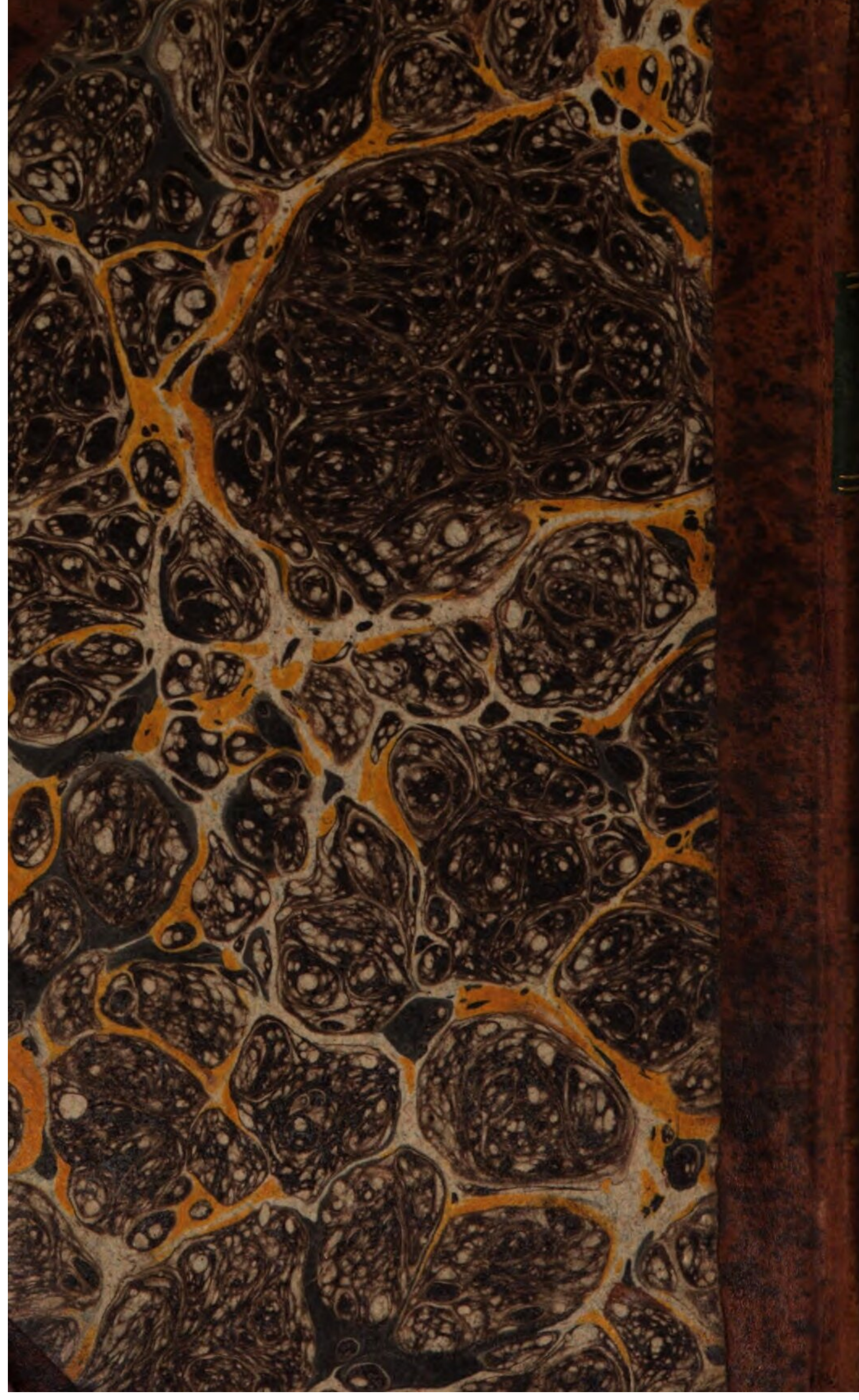
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The Minstrel

Paris [1804?]

Bibl.Mont. 832

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10713932-2